

Port Security Plans Designated as 'Sensitive Security Information'

May 18, 2004

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The government intends to label information on seaport and maritime security as "Sensitive Security Information" (SSI), shielding it from public disclosure, according to a notice in the May 18 Federal Register.

The SSI category currently applies primarily to airport security-related documents.

Since its creation after the 9/11 attacks, the Homeland Security Department's Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has stamped "SSI" on a range of documents that are widely disseminated to airport screeners and other officials - such as airline and airport executives - who do not hold classified security clearances.

The SSI designation shields the documents from Freedom of Information Act requests and makes it easier to penalize individuals - both inside and outside government - who improperly share the information with unauthorized individuals.

An interim rule issued jointly by the TSA and the Transportation Department applies the SSI designation to security plans and other information that shipowners, port authorities and private terminal operators are required to send to the Coast Guard under a maritime security law ([PL 107-295](#)).

The interim rule takes effect on June 17.

"In order to protect the security of the facilities and vessels that prepare security plans, it is necessary to ensure that the plans and related security information are subject to limitations on their disclosure," the notice said.

The designation also will cover "sensitive" information collected through other maritime safety and security laws, the notice said.

The rule is open for public comment until July 19.

Source: **CQ Homeland Security**

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